

CONAN THE
BARBARIAN

THE GREATEST SWORD-AND-SORCERY HERO OF ALL!

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CONAN

THE BARBARIAN



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THE GARDEN OF
FEAR!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN!

THE GARDEN of FEAR

FOR MANY A NIGHT AND DAY, THEY TRAVERSED THE BLEAK BONE OF THE SKY-REACHING MOUNTAIN RANGE---

NOW, A GENTLY ROLLING SLOPE LIES BEFORE THEM--AND CONAN AND THE GIRL CAN FORGET THE WEARY DAYS-- THE FREEZING, BEAST-HAUNTED NIGHTS---

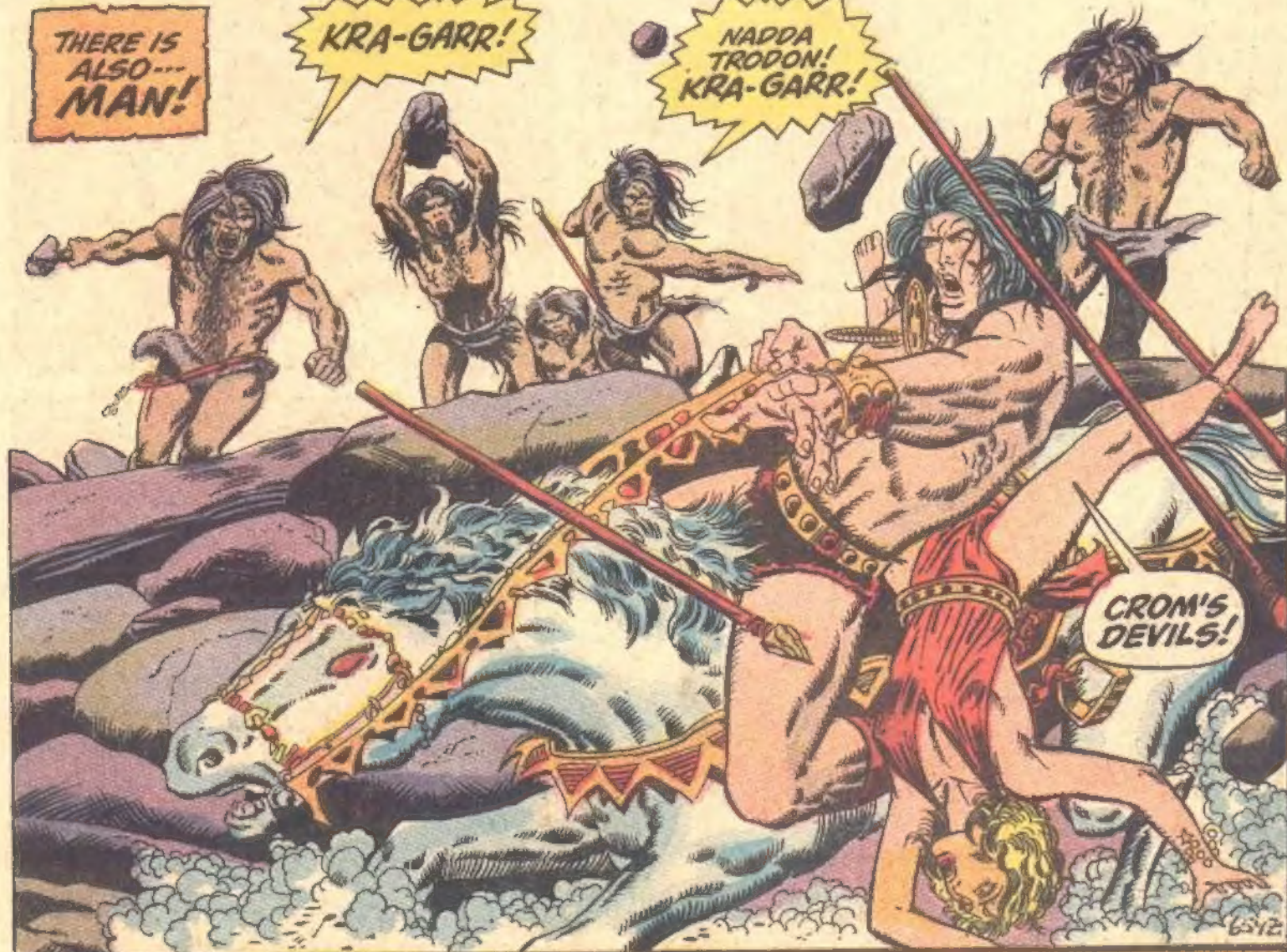
YET, THERE IS A DEADLIER FOE BY FAR THAN THE PROWLING HILL-PANTHER OR THE SCREECHING, BLACK-TALONED CONDOR---



THERE IS ALSO--- MAN!

KRA-GARR!

NADDA TRODON! KRA-GARR!



STAN LEE * ROY THOMAS * BARRY SMITH * SAL BUSCEMA * SAM ROSEN
EDITOR WRITER ARTIST EMBELLISHER LETTERER

BASED ON THE STORY "THE GARDEN OF FEAR" By ROBERT E. HOWARD, CREATOR OF CONAN

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KRA-GARR!
KRA-GARR!

YOU HAIRY
DOGS!

IT TAKES-- NO WIZARD TO KNOW--
YOU'RE CRYING FOR OUR BLOOD--



-- BUT IT'S
NOT FOR
PIGS LIKE
YOU TO
SHED!



BLAST! NOW YOUR
APISH GRUNTS HAVE
SCARED OUR
HORSE.

THAT BEAST
WON'T STOP
RUNNING
TILL IT---

CONAN--
HELP!



JENNA!
I'M COMING,
GIRL---

--AND THE
GATES OF
HELL WILL
YAWN FOR
ANY WHO
BAR MY
PATH.



AWAY, DOG-- WHILE
THERE'S STILL LIFE
IN YOUR MISBORN
BONES!

CLIMB BACK
UP YOUR
TREE-- IF
YOU CAN FIND
ONE IN THESE
HILLS.



HAN! SO YOUR
COURAGE TAKES
WING, DOES IT,
WHEN YOU FACE A
HELPLESS GIRL?

WELL, NOW YOU
FIGHT A MAN--
ONE WHO IS
GOING TO---

CONAN!



LOOK OU---
OH HHH

KARA-NO!

THEY--THEY'VE STOPPED ATTACKING US!

AND--JUST IN TIME.

NADDA KRA-GARR. NI DIKTA.

IZTAN, HIALMAR.

HMMM--- I DON'T KNOW THEIR TONGUE-- BUT THAT MUST BE THEIR CHIEF UP THERE.

OH, CONAN-- I'M AFRAID-- SO AFRAID--

WADA. MORDA LLAMAR.

WHATEVER YOU DO, GIRL--- DON'T SHOW IT.

IZTAN, HIALMAR.

EK KAA HIALMAR. MORDA LLAMAR.

HIS NAME MUST BE HIALMAR-- AND HE WANTS US TO COME WITH THEM.

A PIECE OF LUCK.

BAD LUCK-- IF THEY TURN OUT TO BE. CANNIBALS!

OHHHHH--!

--LOOK, CONAN. TWO VALLEYS--- DEEP GORGES--

-- WALLED OFF FROM EACH OTHER BY SHEER CLIFFS, SAVE FOR THAT NARROW PASS.

I WONDER WHAT LIES BEYOND.

NADDA BA-DOWN. GARAAGA. GARAAGA!

HE DIDN'T LIKE IT WHEN YOU POINTED TO THAT FAR GORGE, JENNA.

THERE'S SOMETHING OUT THERE HE HATES -- EVEN FEARS--- I'D BET MY BROAD-SWORD ON IT.

IF YOU HAD A BROAD-SWORD.

IT IS STILL DARK WHEN THEY REACH THE VILLAGE-- BUT NEITHER TOO LATE, NOR TOO EARLY, FOR A FEAST---

HOW CAN YOU JUST DEVOUR THAT MEAT? IT--IT'S NEARLY RAW.

SO IS MY HUNGER, WENCH.

BESIDES, WHAT MEAT WOULD WE BOTH HAVE GOT---

-- IF THOSE CORINTHIAN SOLDIERS WHO WERE CHASING US HAD CARTED ME OFF TO PRISON-- AND YOU AS WELL, JUST FOR KNOWING ME?

I--- SEE WHAT YOU MEAN.

NOW, I MUST LEAVE YOU---

THEN, WITH RECKLESS ABANDON, THE CIMMERIAN THROWS HIMSELF WITH FULL FRENZY INTO THE HILLMEN'S DANCE---

--WHILE THE GIRL FROM SHADIZAR PONDERES THE FINE LINE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HILL-SAVAGES-- AND HER STRANGE NORTHERN BARBARIAN.

YET, WHILE THE SHADOW OF NIGHT IS STILL ON THE LAND--

THEY'RE NOT CANNIBALS, AT LEAST.

BUT THEY STILL ACT SORRY TO SEE US GO SO SOON.

WELL, I'M NOT. WE'VE GOT TO FIND THAT HORSE, SOMEHOW.

LOOK. HE-- WANTS TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING.

A ROPE-- --A KNIFE-- AND A FLINT TO MAKE FIRE. MY THANKS, HIALMAR.

I WONDER IF THEY HAVE ANY PRECIOUS STONES FROM THESE HILLS---

HIDE YOUR GREED, GIRL. THESE ARE SIMPLE FOLK.

WELL, THERE'S NO HARM IN ASKING, IS TH--

OOOH--WHERE DID THAT WIND SPRING FROM?

WIND? THERE'S BEEN NO WIND SINCE---

THEN: THE SUDDEN THUNDER OF SWOOPING WINGS---

CROM! WHAT IN--?

A VAST DARK SHARP, RUSHING OUT OF THE NIGHT---

--RUSHING TOWARD JENNA!

NEXT, A GREAT BUFFETING PINION WHICH SENDS YOUNG CONAN SPRAWLING, AS THE GIRL IS TORN FROM HIS SIDE---

AND THEN, THERE IS NAUGHT TO DO BUT ROAR HIS GRIEF AND FUTILE FURY--

--AS THAT WINGED SHAPE VANISHES ONCE MORE INTO THE HOVERING DARKNESS---

--A WHITE, SCREAMING, WRITHING FIGURE TRAILING FROM MIGHTY TALONS.

HELPLESS RAGE WELLING UP WITHIN HIS BREAST, CONAN FACES THE MILLING SAVAGES...

THAT WAS NO MERE CONDOR.

WHAT WAS IT? WHAT??

BUT SLOWLY, WITH SHRUGGING SHOULDERS, THEY TURN THEIR BACKS ON HIM--SILENT BUT FOR A SINGLE WORD--

GARAKAA!

"GARAKAA"--THE NAME FOR THAT WHICH LIVES BEYOND THE CLIFFS.

AND--THE WAY THEY RETURN, LISTLESS, TO THEIR FIRES...

--AS IF THIS HAD HAPPENED TO THEM BEFORE AND WOULD HAPPEN AGAIN.

BUT THIS TIME--IT HAPPENED TO ME!

THE LAST SHADOWS OF NIGHT ENWRAP THE VILLAGE--AND NONE WITHIN LOOK BACK, SAVE ONLY HIALMAR--

AND AFTER A WHILE, ONE OF THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE BEGINS HOARSELY TO CHANT--

--THE DEATH-DIRGE OF THE HILLS.

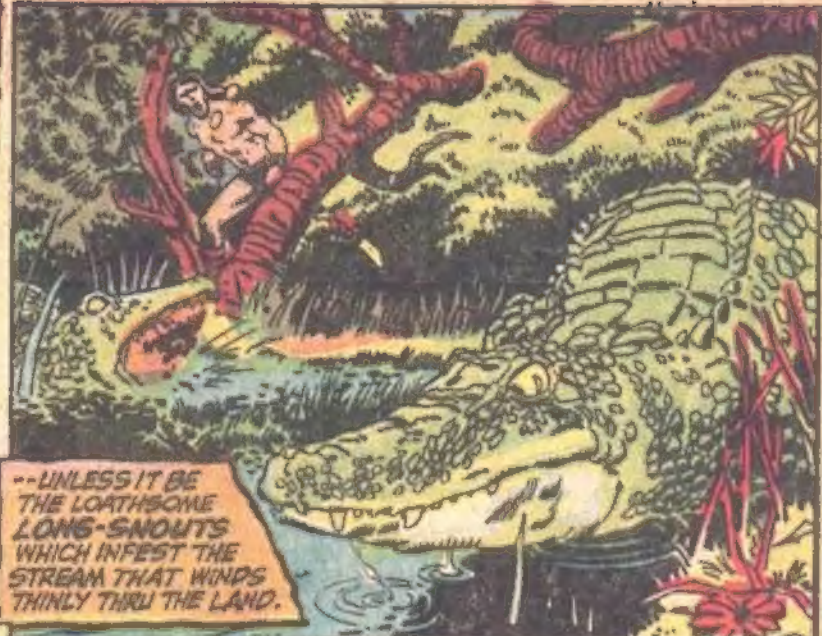
BUT CONAN THINKS NO MORE OF WHAT IS LEFT BEHIND, BUT ONLY OF WHAT MAY LIE AHEAD--

--AS, WITH THE FIRST FAINT GLOW OF DAWN, HE REACHES THE FIRST OF TWO BROAD VALLEYS--

IT IS A SIMPLE THING TO
DESCEND THE DEW-SPECKED
SLOPE, INTO THE VERDANT
FOREST---



BUT WHAT CAN
KEEP THE HILL-MEN
OUT OF THIS VALLEY--
CRINGING IN THE
CRASS ABOVE---



--UNLESS IT BE
THE LOATHSOME
LONG-SNOUTS
WHICH INFEST THE
STREAM THAT WINDS
THINLY THRU THE LAND.

AND THEN, CONAN
SEES THEM---



--GREAT-TUSKED BEASTS THAT GRUNT AND BELLOW
IN THE EARLY MORNING CHILL-- HAIRY MOUNTAINS
OF FLESH AND BONE AND MUSCLE---

YET, CONAN
WASTES LITTLE
TIME PONDERING
IF THESE BE
ELEPHANTS,
OR SOMETHING
ELSE ENTIRELY--



FOR, HIS EYES
AND MIND ARE
FOCUSED ON
THE ONE THING
WHICH HOLDS
MEANING
FOR HIM---



--- THE POINT BEYOND THE
FORAGING BEHEMOTHS, THAT
PLACE WHERE THE SKY-
TOWERING CLIFFS DO NOT
QUITE CONVERGE---



--A POINT REACHABLE ONLY BY WALKING DIRECTLY THRU THE VERY MIDST OF THE GREAT TUSKERS.



SOFTLY HE GOES -- LIKE ONE WHO TREADS THE WINGS OF BUTTERFLIES---

BUT THE MAN-SCENT IS UPON HIM---



AND SO---



SATISFIED, OLD SNIFFER?

I'M NOT ONE WHO WOULD HARM YOU--- IF HE COULD.

THE GREAT GOD CROM LIVES IN A FAR-OFF MOUNTAIN, AND MEDDLES NOT IN THE AFFAIRS OF MERE MEN---



BUT, THAT MOMENT SWIFTLY PASSES, AS---

YOU'RE IN THAT SECOND VALLEY, AREN'T YOU, JENNA?

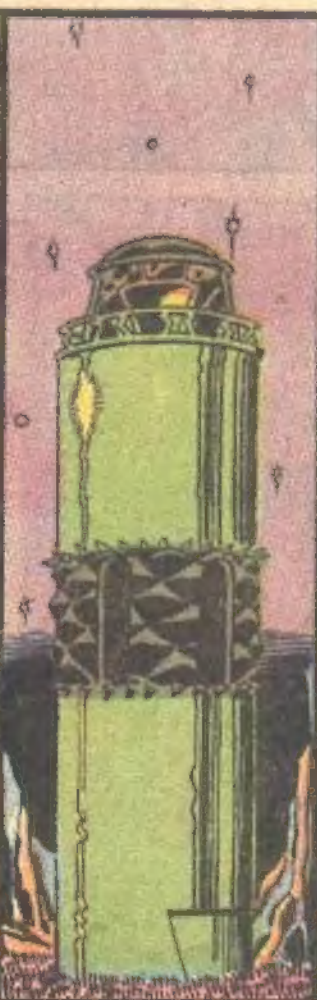
SOMEHOW, I KNOW YOU ARE.

YET SURELY SOME-ONE HAS STOOD AT HIS SHOULDER THIS DAY--- AND FOR A MOMENT, CONAN WONDERS WHO---




BUT I CAN'T WALK ON WATER TO YOUR SIDE.

SO, IT'S EITHER HUG THE CLIFFS, OR---






THE LANDSCAPE
OF A DREAM. A
FANTASTIC GREEN-
STONE TOWER,
AND A FIELD OF
TALL, NEARLY
COLORLESS
FLOWERS...




THEN, SUDDENLY,
CONAN STANDS
STOCK STILL...
FOR THERE IS
LIFE AND
MOVEMENT
ATOP THAT
FORBIDDING
PARAPET--

--A MAN--




--BUT A MAN
STEPPED
STRAIGHT FROM
A BARBARIAN'S
DEEPEST NIGHT-
MARES!

AND, ASSAULTING THE SENSES--A STRANGE
REEK, A SMELL AS OF DEATH AND DECAY--



TALL AND EBON
BLACK HE STANDS
--AS POWERFUL
PINIONS FOLD
ABOUT HIS
SHOULDERS--


HAWKLIKE,
HE SURVEYS
HIS LOST
DOMAIN IN
THE PRE-DAWN
GLOW--
TAKING NO
NOTICE OF
THE MOTION-
LESS MAN
BELOW--



IS HE MERELY SOME FREAK OF NATURE, DWELL-
ING IN ETERNAL SOLITUDE-- OR THE LONE
SURVIVOR OF SOME FORGOTTEN RACE WHICH
REIGNED AND VANISHED BEFORE THE COMING
OF MAN?

CONAN CANNOT
KNOW-- NOR
MAY WE.


YET THERE
SEEMS NO
OTHER
SIGN OF
LIFE IN ALL
THE SPRAWL-
ING VALLEY--



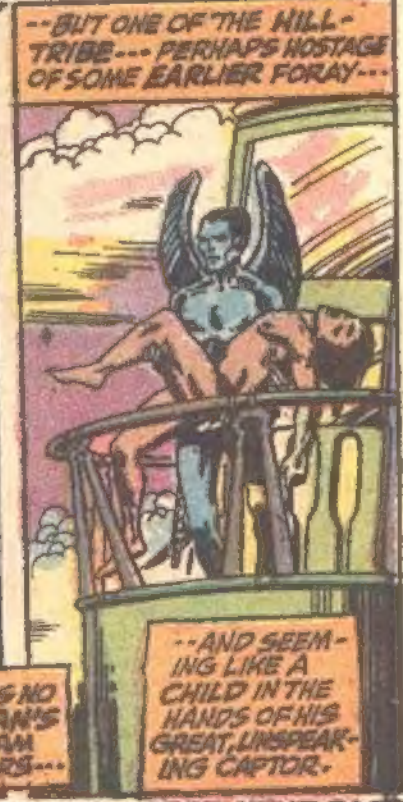
NOW, THE SILENT
ONE STRIDES
INTO THE GREAT
TOWER--

AS, FROM
WITHIN ITS
HIGH RAMPARTS,
THE CIMMERIAN
HEARS A
MUFFLED
CRY--

JENNA!?



YET, 'TIS NO
WOMAN'S
SCREAM
HE HEARS--

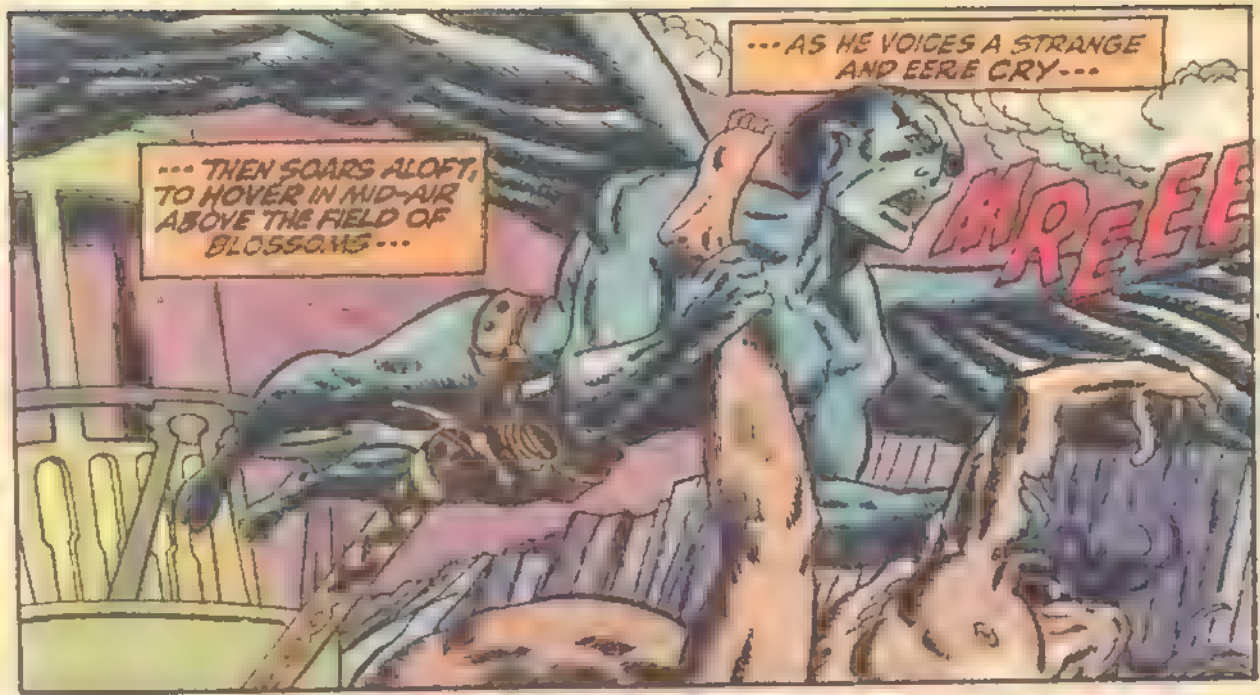


--BUT ONE OF THE HILL-
TRIBE-- PERHAPS HOSTAGE
OF SOME EARLIER FORAY--

--AND SEEM-
ING LIKE A
CHILD IN THE
HANDS OF HIS
GREAT, UNSPEAK-
ING CAPTOR.

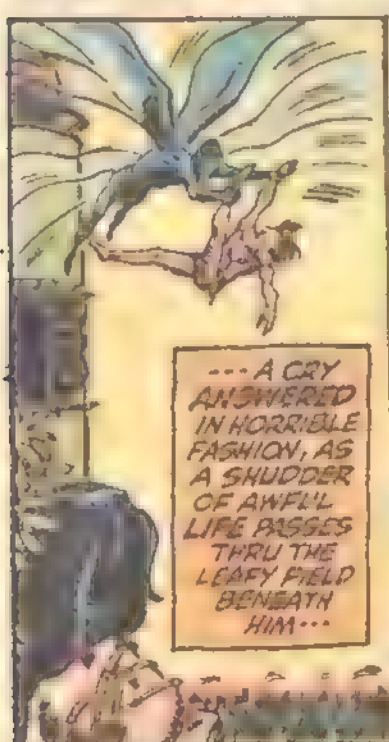


THE WINGED ONE
SPREADS BROAD
WINGS...



...AS HE VOICES A STRANGE
AND EERE CRY...

... THEN SOARS ALOFT,
TO HOVER IN MID-AIR
ABOVE THE FIELD OF
BLOSSOMS...



... A CRY
ANSWERED
IN HORRIBLE
FASHION, AS
A SHUDDER
OF AWFUL
LIFE PASSES
THRU THE
LEAFY FIELD
BENEATH
HIM...



HE!



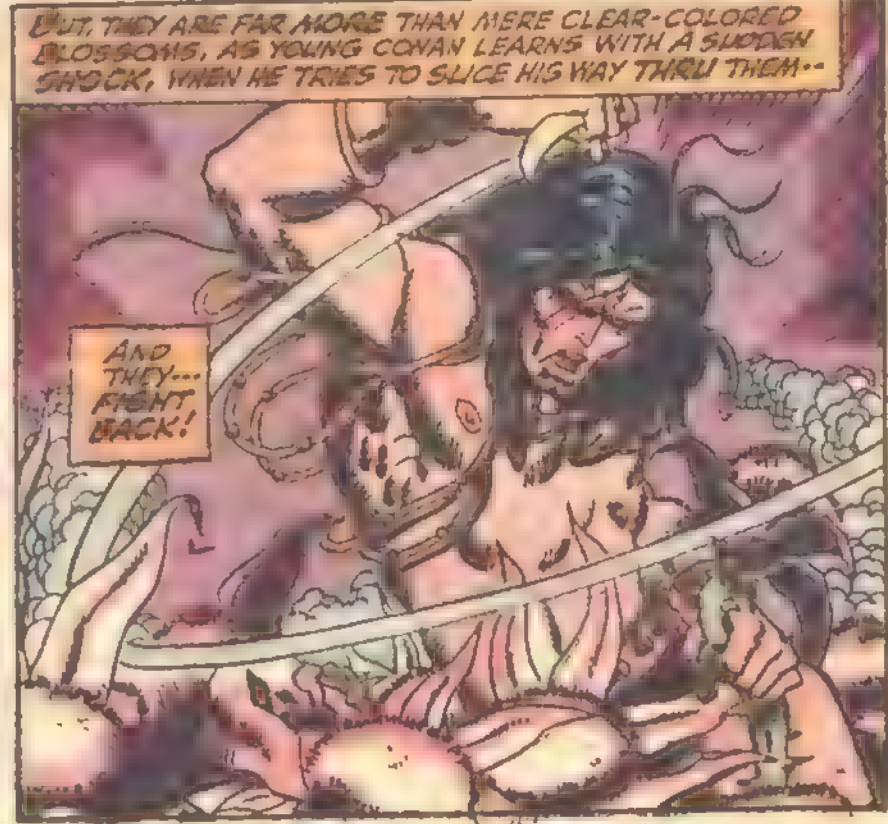
I'LL CUT YOU OUT
OF THERE, MAN...
SO YOU CAN
STOP YOUR
SCREAMING.

YOU MAY
KNOW
ABOUT
SOMEONE
I CAME TO
FIND.

STOP YOUR
SCREAMING,
I TELL YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU
AFRAID OF?



THEY'RE
ONLY...
FLOWERS.



BUT, THEY ARE FAR MORE THAN MERE CLEAR-COLORED
BLOSSOMS, AS YOUNG CONAN LEARNS WITH A SUDDEN
SHOCK, WHEN HE TRIES TO SLICE HIS WAY THRU THEM--

AND
THEY...
FIGHT
BACK!



WHAT KIND OF MADNESS INFESTS THIS VALLEY?

I COME HERE TO SAVE A GIRL FROM A BIRD-- A GIANT CONDOR, PERHAPS---

...AND I FIND A BLACK-WINGED DEVIL-- FLOWERS THAT FORM A SOLID WALL AGAINST ME...



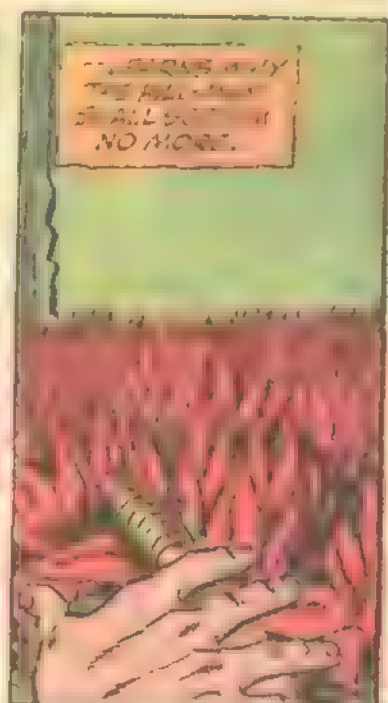
EH? THE SCREAMING HAS-- STOPPED.



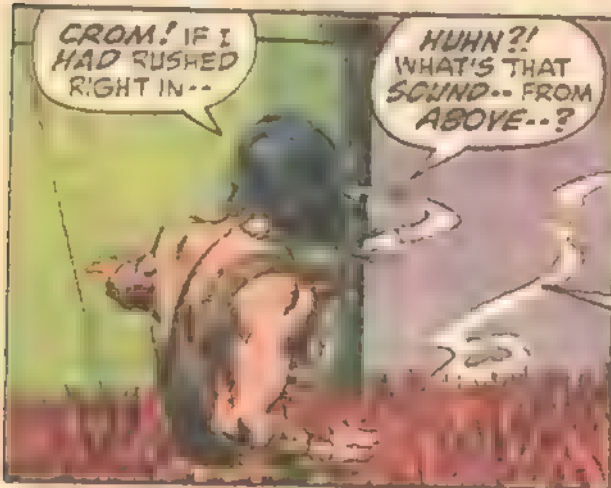
THEN, STEELY BLUE EYES WIDEN-- EYES WHICH HAVE SEEN APES WALK LIKE MEN, AND BEHELD GREY-CLOAKED GODS STRIDING THRU STORMY SKIES---



...AS CONAN LEAPS THE GRM ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION WHICH RISES, UN-VOICED, TO HIS LIPS--



...THAT'S WHY THE ALL-POWERFUL IS ALL-POWERLESS-- NO MORE.

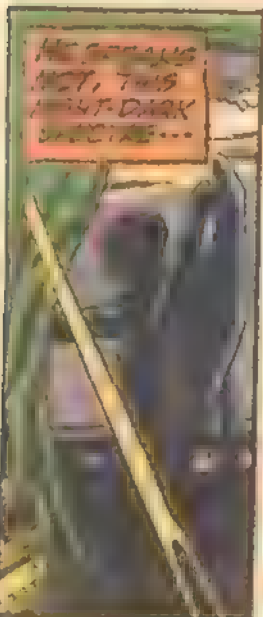


CROM! IF I HAD RUSHED RIGHT IN--

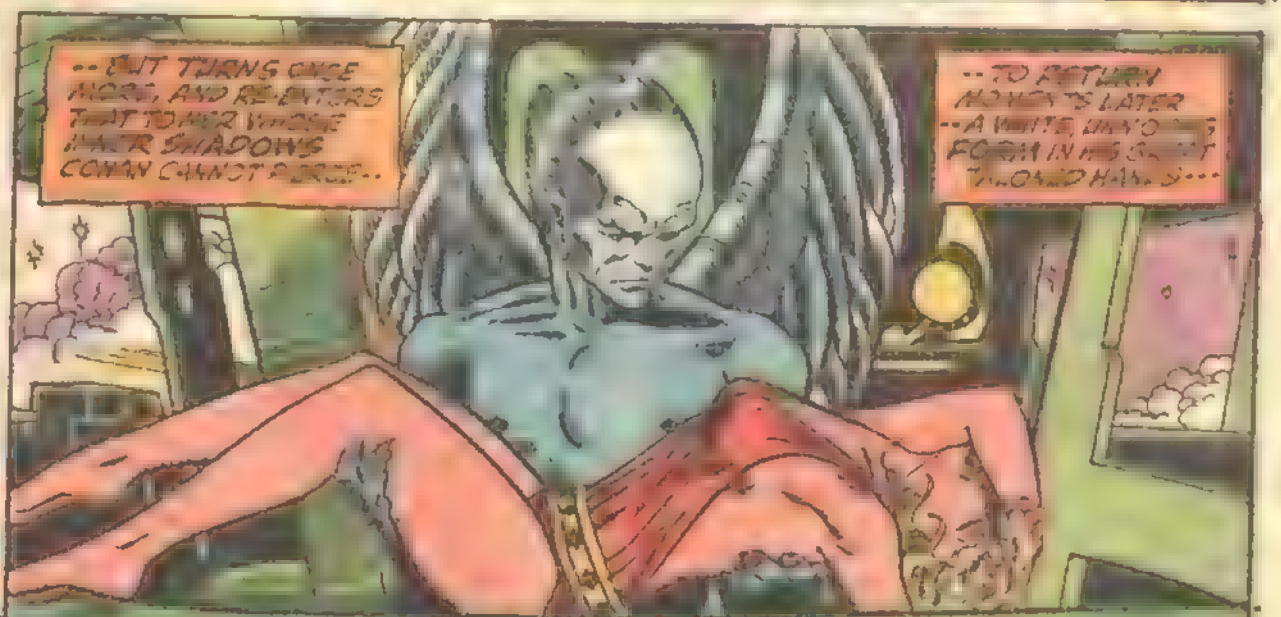
HUHN?! WHAT'S THAT SOUND-- FROM ABOVE--?



THE WINGED ONE!



HE SPEAKS NOT, THIS NIGHT-DARK DEVIL...



...BUT TURNS ONCE MORE, AND RE-ENTERS THAT TOHER WHOLE IN HER SHADOWS CONAN CANNOT PERCE--

...TO RETURN MOMENTS LATER-- A WHITE, UNO-- FORM IN HIS SH-- TOWARD HANDS---

---WHICH HE HOLDS
OVER THE RAILING'S
EDGE, AS HE UTTERS
A TAUNTING SHOUT,
IN A LANGUAGE NO
HUMAN TONGUE
COULD EVER MASTER---

MMRRNN
NDRRRMM!

JENNA!

CONAN!
OH CONAN--
PLEASE--

HELP
ME!
HELP
ME!

I-- CAN'T--!

ONCE, THE MAN-
DEMON MAKES
AS IF TO CAST
HER DOWN
AMONGST THOSE
MURDEROUS
THORNS---

-- AND ONLY IRON
CONTROL KEEPS
CONAN FROM
PLUNGING INTO THAT
RED SEA OF HELL!

BUT, 'T WAS A
MERE GESTURE
... THE PLAYING
OF CAT WITH
MOUSE BEFORE
THE KILL---

AND THE YOUNG BAR-
BARIAN CAN DO NO-
THING--- NOTHING
SAVE SWALLOW THE
PANTHERISH RAGE
WITHIN HIM---

--- NOTHING
SAVE TURN HIS
BACK---

-- AND STRIDE
OFF TOWARD
THE FOREST.

...TILL HE REACHES ONCE MORE THAT DRY-GRASS VALE WHERE LUMBER MONSTERS WHO DWARE THE DARK-WINGED DEMON...

...TILL HE REACHES ONCE MORE THAT DRY-GRASS VALE WHERE LUMBER MONSTERS WHO DWARE THE DARK-WINGED DEMON...

...TILL HE REACHES ONCE MORE THAT DRY-GRASS VALE WHERE LUMBER MONSTERS WHO DWARE THE DARK-WINGED DEMON...

YOU TUSKERS SHOULD AFFRIGHT ME FAR MORE THAN HE... BUT YOU DON'T.

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE HE'S SO LIKE A MAN-- AND YET, SO STRANGELY UNLIKE.

BUT YOU WOULDN'T FEAR THE WINGED ONE, WOULD YOU?

NO, THERE IS BUT ONE THING YOU WOULD FEAR...

ONE THING IN ALL THE WORLD...

AND NOW, A LIVING RAMPAART OF FLAME STEEPS THE VALLEY... DRIVING BEFORE IT A CRUSHING HURRICANE OF FLESH... A BELLOWING EARTHQUAKE OF HURTLE BONE AND MUSCLE...

FIRE!

...TILL HE REACHES ONCE MORE THAT DRY-GRASS VALE WHERE LUMBER MONSTERS WHO DWARE THE DARK-WINGED DEMON...

THRU THE WATERY GAP BETWEEN THE VALLEYS THEY THUNDER---



BEHIND THEM, THE FIRE WHICH ROARS LIKE AN EARTH-CONSUMING STORM--

--AND THE FRAIL MANLING, FORGOTTEN BY THE TITANS IN THEIR HEADLONG FLIGHT---



--YET TREADING HARD UP ON THEIR LEVIATHAN HEELS!



TREES ARE UPROOTED, DENSE THICKETS LEVELED--- AS THE GREAT GREEN TOWER LOOMS IN VIEW---



A LONE BEHEMOTH MIGHT BE PULLED DOWN BY THE DEVIL-PLANTS--- DESTROYED-- DEVoured --- BUT, BEFORE THE WHOLE RAMPAGING HERD, THEY ARE NO MORE THAN--- FLOWERS---

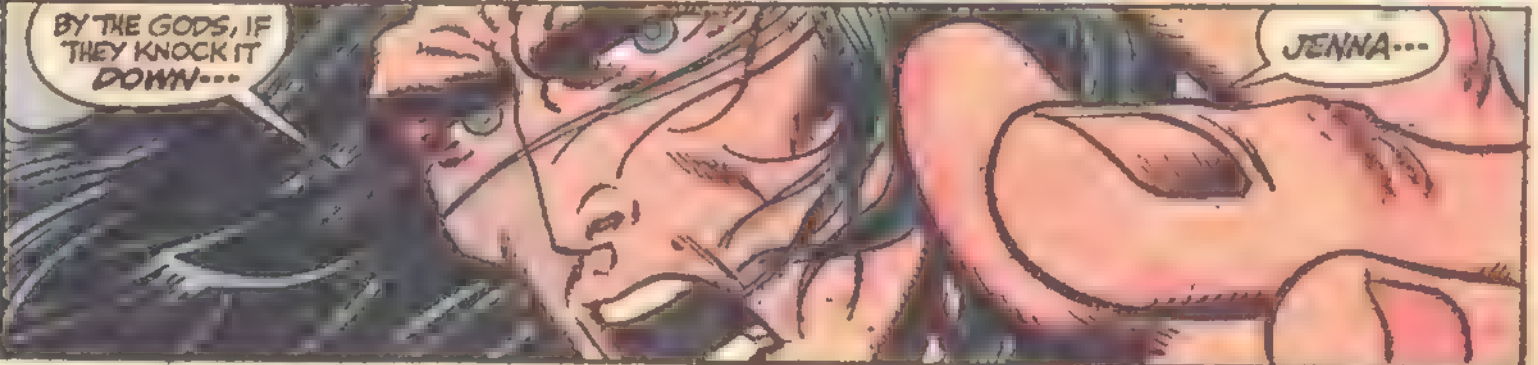


AND THEN--- THE TOWER ITSELF!

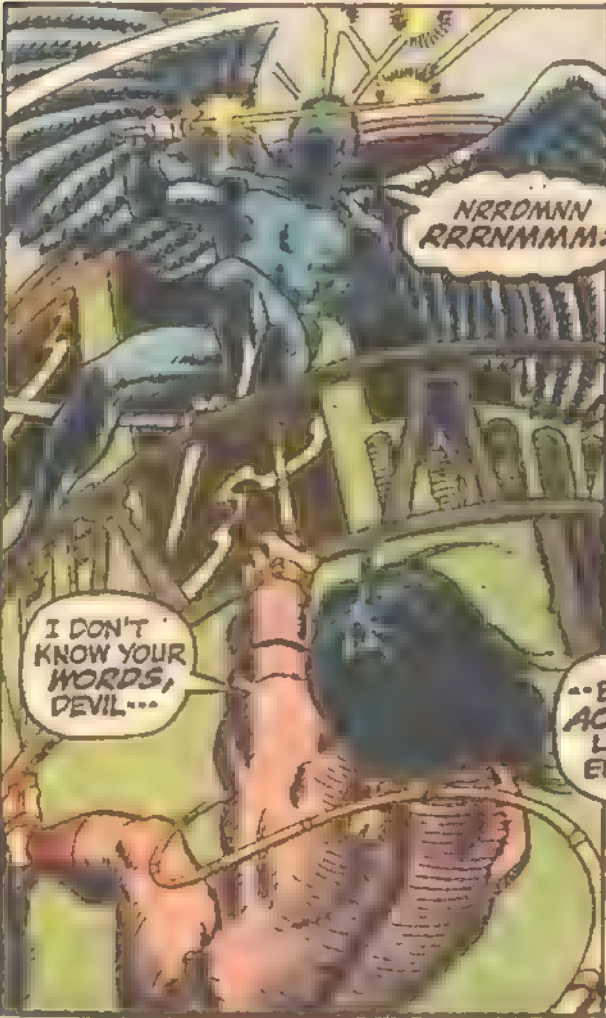
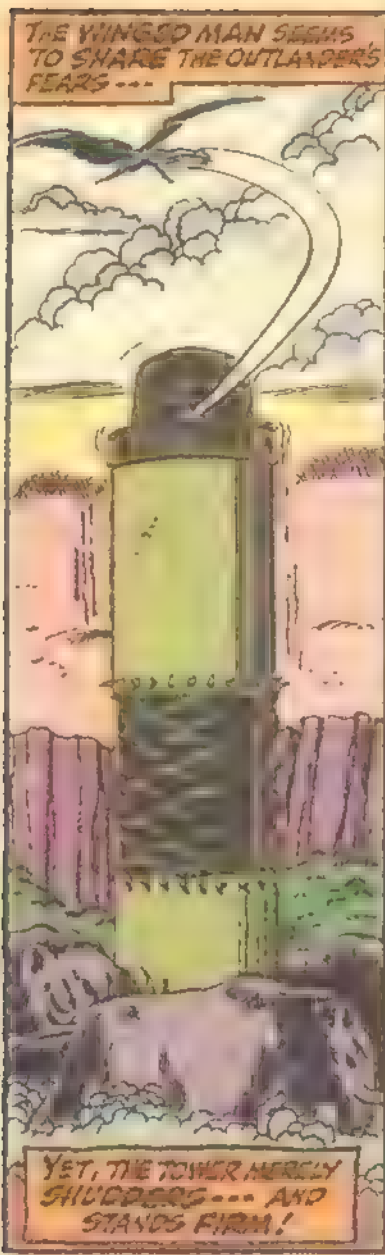


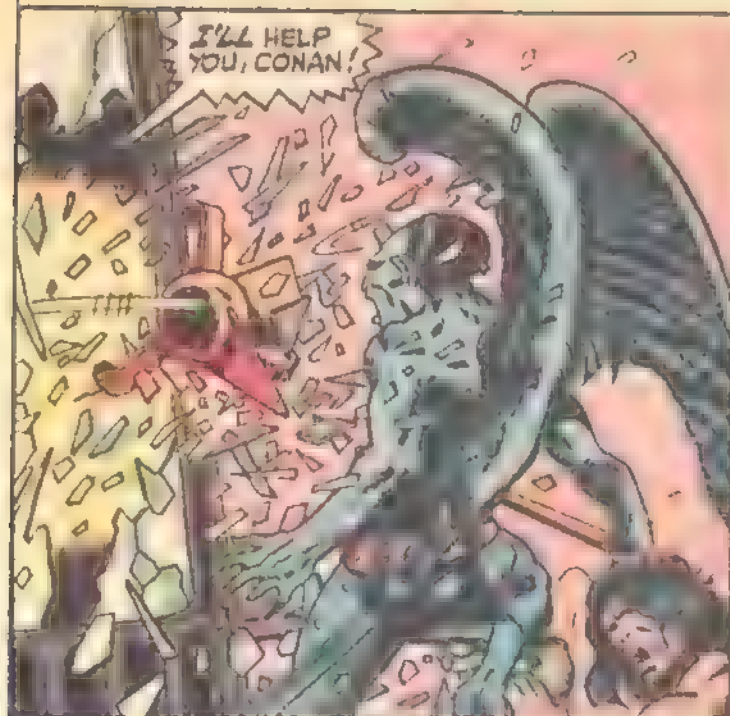
AROUND IT, YOU BRUTES! GO AROUND THE TOWER!

BY THE GODS, IF THEY KNOCK IT DOWN---

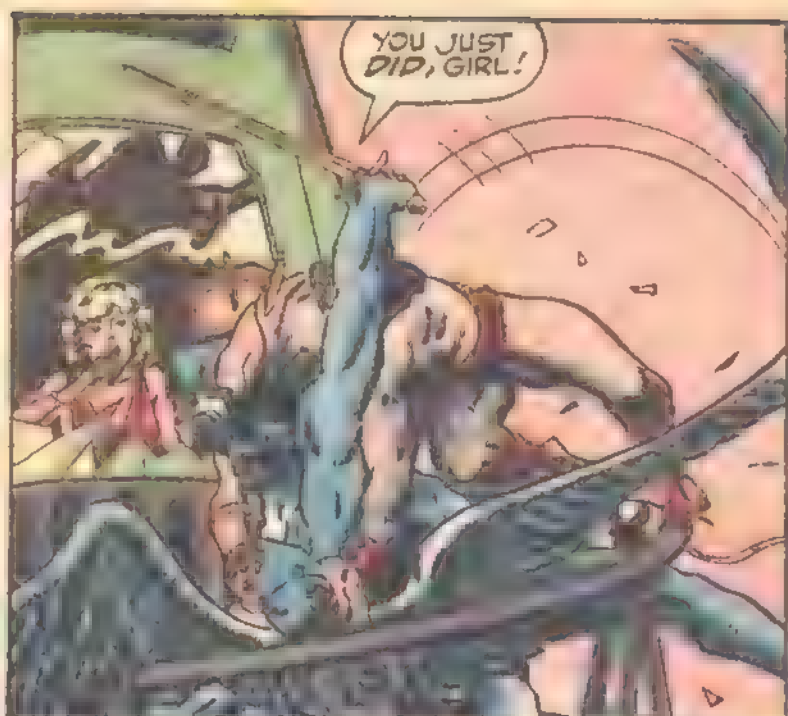


JENNA---

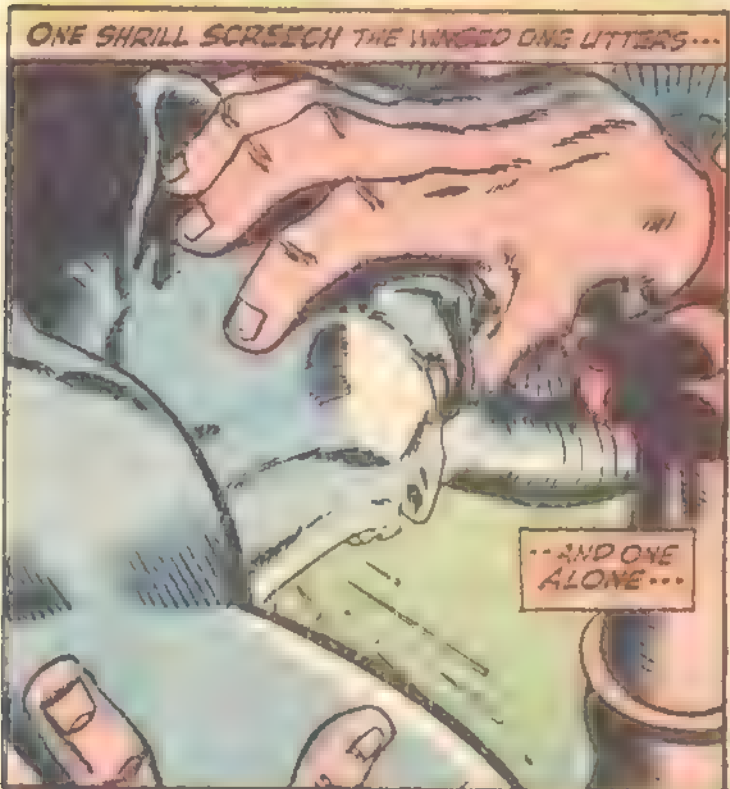




I'LL HELP
YOU, CONAN!

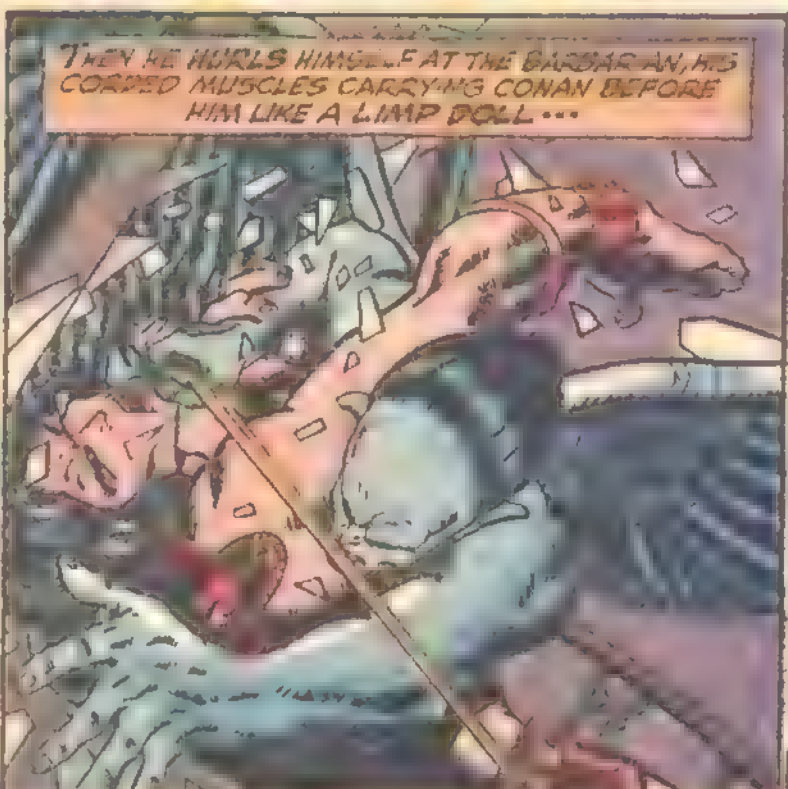


YOU JUST
DID, GIRL!

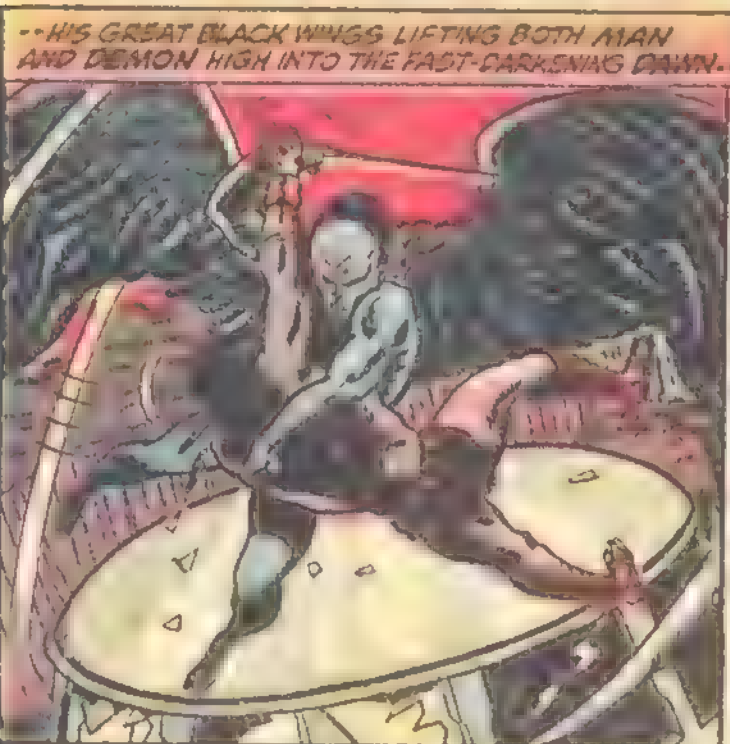


ONE SHRILL SCREECH THE WINGED ONE UTTERS...

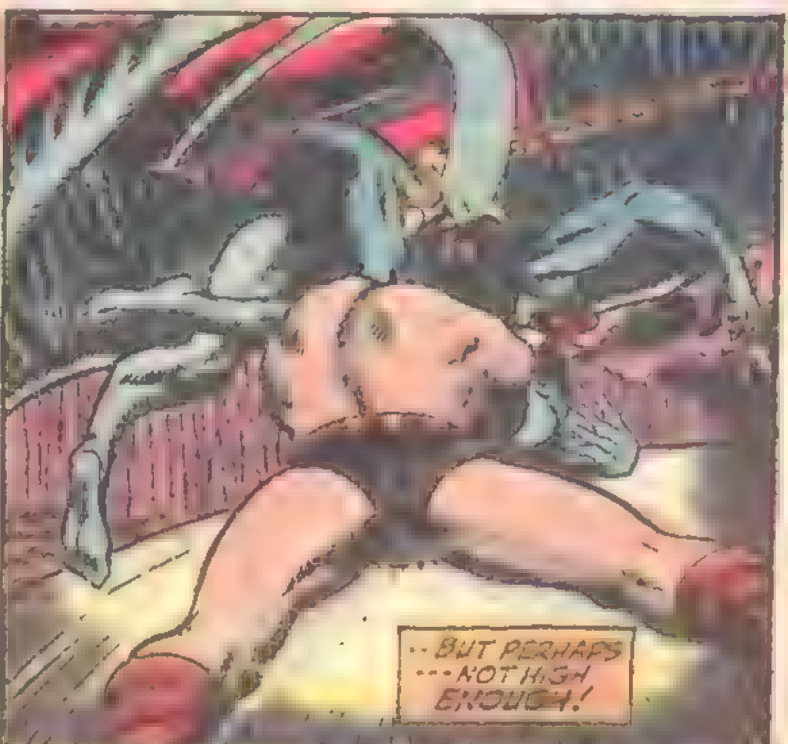
...AND ONE
ALONE...



THEN HE HURLS HIMSELF AT THE BARBARIAN, HIS
CORDED MUSCLES CARRYING CONAN BEFORE
HIM LIKE A LIMP DOLL...



...HIS GREAT BLACK WINGS LIFTING BOTH MAN
AND DEMON HIGH INTO THE FAST-DARKENING DAWN...



...BUT PERHAPS
...NOT HIGH
ENOUGH!

QUESTIONS:
THERE ARE SO
MANY
QUESTIONS....

QUESTIONS THE WINGED ONE
ALONE COULD ANSWER...

QUESTIONS WHICH
WOULD FALL LIKE THE
SUDDEN RAIN FROM
THE LIPS OF CIVILIZED
MEN-- OF SCHOLARS--

--BUT NOT FROM
CONAN'S!



WHAT IS IT
LIKE, TO BE
THE LONE
SURVIVOR
OF A LEGEND-
BIRTHING RACE?

HOW DID IT
FEEL TO SEE
ATLANTIS AND
LEMURIA RISE
FROM THE MIRE
OF SAVAGERY,
BECOME MIGHTY
EMPIRES...

--ONLY TO SINK AT LAST,
ENGULFED BY MAN-
HUNGERING SEAS...

...AND YOU
ALONE
ALWAYS...
ALWAYS,
ALWAYS
ALONE...



QUESTIONS: THERE ARE SO MANY QUESTIONS---



QUESTIONS WHICH SHALL NEVER BE ASKED!



JENNA... THE WINGED ONE... IS HE--?

HE'S... DEAD, CONAN!

THEN I... CAN LIVE.



I... I WAS SO AFRAID, CONAN. IF THAT CREATURE HAD SLAIN YOU--

-- YOU'D HAVE CHARMED HIM, SOONER OR LATER, INTO WASTING YOU OUT OF THIS VALLEY.

DON'T CRY, GIRL.

IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME A WINGED DEVIL CARRIED YOU OFF!



HOW CAN YOU JOKE ABOUT SUCH A THING?

DON'T YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT MY FEELINGS AT ALL? I---

LET'S GO. THE SUN IS COMING OUT.

ALMOST AS IF THE STORM DIED---



--WHEN HE DID.



MUST WE LEAVE--SO SOON?

THERE MAY BE RICHES ABOUT... AND BESIDES..



DON'T YOU WANT TO LEARN WHAT THESE SYMBOLS MEAN--

--OR WHY THIS IMAGE IS CARVED HERE--WITH HAIR AFLAME?



ALL I KNOW IS THAT MY HAIRS STAND LIKE FLAMES ON THE NAPE OF MY NECK--

--AND THEY WILL, UNTIL THIS VALLEY IS JUST A BAD MEMORY.

HAH! SO THERE IS A DOOR TO THIS THING, AFTER ALL.



BUT-- WHY ARE THOSE ELEPHANTS SO UNLIKE THE ONES OF WHOM THE SHEMITES TELL?

THESE TERRIBLE FLOWERS, CONAN--WHY DO THEY GROW ONLY HERE?

HOW DID THEY DEVOUR--



THAT REMINDS ME-- I DROPPED OUR FOOD-POUCH OUT THERE SOMEWHERE.

WELL, MAYBE THERE'S FOOD ON THE YONDER SIDE OF THOSE CLIFFS.

WE'D BETTER GO---



--BEFORE THOSE HAIRY TUSKERS START LOOKING GOOD TO ME.

AND THEY WALKED HAND IN HAND OUT OF THE VALLEY-- AND INTO THE GOLDEN ARMS OF MORNING.

THE HYBORIAN PAGE

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Dear People:

Your adaptation of Howard's "The Tower of the Elephant", in issue #4, was both a beautiful graft from one medium to the other, and a sheer joy in artwork. I was sufficiently impressed to warrant buying four copies—a high compliment, on my paycheck.

So far, you've kept to one-issue stories and done consistently well. Let's see how Thomas and Smith can carry off one of Howard's longer novelettes, such as "The People of the Black Circle," or perhaps "Beyond the Black River." An original line developed over three or more issues would be worth trying, too.

Conan #5 was also well done; I hope that going monthly won't result in a decrease in quality. However, one point needs mentioning at length: At the end of "Zukala's Daughter," you have the wizard vanishing with his lovestruck daughter, threatening dire vengeance upon the Cimmerian. A recurring enemy is a good way to boost sales, true, and I've no objection to Zukala taking running snipes at Conan now and then (although, as I recall, the only fairly regular foe he had was Thoth-Amon of the Ring). But I notice an ominous hint (hopefully mere paranoia on my part) of a romantic involvement between Conan and Zephra. Now, a resident nemesis, as I said, I'll go along with reservedly . . . but I am strongly opposed to any sustained sub-plots involving unrequited love. They work well to excellently in your other magazines, but in CONAN they would be disastrous, pure and simple.

Michael Reaves, 2986 Turrill
San Bernardino, Calif. 92405

We totally agree, Mike. Thus, even the current relationship between Conan and Jenna will doubtless peter out one of these issues—in a way we know Robert E. Howard would have approved of. (As to how we know this—well, stick around, astute one, and we'll prove it beyond the shadow of a doubt.)

It'll be some time before Roy and Barry reach the later Conan tales in their rhapsodic re-tellings, but in the meantime they have a two-part original story planned for an early pair of issues—one part based upon an authentic yarn by REH, the other an original Thomas/Smith collaboration. Kind of whets the appetite, eh?

Dear Stan, Roy, and Barry,

CONAN #5 was a bit of a letdown after #4. Here, I think, is why: Frank Giacoia is too brutal an inker for Barry's delicate pencils. In #4, Sal Buscema sensitively enhanced Barry's drawings, and the result (along with some incredible coloring) was Barry's career peak in artistic achievement—but only so far.

Aside from the disappointing artwork—and note that I attribute that wholly to Giacoia—CONAN #5 was another masterpiece. Roy's writing was never more crisp or suspenseful—qualities which are always lacking in Stan's scripts (and which no amount of glibness veneer can completely cover). I particularly enjoyed Conan's exclamation, "Do doors mean nothing in this place?"

CONAN is easily your (Marvel's) best work. But please, if you can't get Sal back to ink it, then have Palmer and Giacoia switch off between DAREDEVIL and CONAN. And thanks for making the Cimmerian monthly!

Michael Barson, Box 31, Bowdoin College
Brunswick, Me. 04011

Our pleasure, lad. But now, if we can brush aside poor Stan for a moment (while's he's trying in vain to smile thru his glib veneer of tears), we thought we'd best comment on your criticism of the artwork. Perhaps it's just that you don't like

fearless Frank's inking period—but there was another factor on CONAN #8 of which you are doubtless unaware.

Namely, our first half dozen or so issues of Conan were dialogue-scripted, inked, and printed out of order from the way Barry did them. Just for the record, here is the order in which our bashful Britisher penciled the first eight Conan comic-book tales: #1, #2, #5, (!), #4, #3, #7, #6, then the adaptation in SAVAGE TALES #1. Does that clear up any mysteries, Michael?

Interestingly, a goodly number of Marvel's top inkers have had a crack at CONAN in these first few issues: Dan Adkins, Sal Buscema, Frank Giacoia (who's still tops in our book), Tom Sutton, Tom Palmer. And this issue was to add another star to that sky: reckless Reed Crandall, one of the Golden-Age greats of the comics world. However, one of those ever-capricious deadline problems arose, and speed-demon Sal Buscema came to our rescue. Maybe one of these first few issues, huh, Reed?

(Meanwhile, Mr. Crandall's legion of fans can thrill to his first Marvel masterpiece in over a decade in the latest issue of CREATURES ON THE LOOSE—now on sale—as he pen-and-inks a werewolf tale to end 'em all! Miss it not!)

Dear Stan, Roy, and Barry,

I'm not one who usually writes letters of praise, but CONAN #5 gave me so much enjoyment that I had to write. After seeing some of Barry's Kirby/Steranko imitations, I became one of his most ardent critics. I became so prejudiced against his art that I find it hard now to believe that I am writing in praise of it. It seems, however, that Barry is finally coming into his own, and his art now is more sophisticated than even the King's was at a comparable time. Three improvements are evident to me: (1) His toning down of the exaggerated proportions of limbs which seemed to go Kirby one better; (2) his better grasp of layouts; and (3) the very good use of shadows, which is just perfect for a mag like CONAN. Another improvement is the wealth of detail present in his drawings, which is proof of the effort he has obviously put into the mag.

Nor are Barry's efforts the only ones evident; Roy's efforts to make CONAN a great mag are also in evidence. In fact, I don't recall so much care being given to the production of any comic-mags since the Thomas/Adams/Palmer teamup in the X-MEN series. I realize there might be technical problems, but please, if at all possible, try a Smith/Palmer teamup on art. It can't miss.

Harry S. Fung, University of Calif.
Berkeley, Calif. 94703

It didn't, friend—at least, not in the handful of pages which titanic Tom Palmer inked of our last issue when inker Tom Sutton (don't get 'em confused, now!) got slowed down a bit and Mr. P. came to his (and our) rescue. Incidentally, is there any eagle-eyed CONAN fanatic out there who can tell us which four or five pages Tom Palmer inked in issue #8? We'll give you one small hint; they're not all in order, and they're neither at the very beginning nor at the tail-end of the mag. Happy hunting, Hyboriophiles!

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